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**REMARKS
BY
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KEYNOTE ADDRESS
AMERICAN APPAREL AND FOOTWEAR ASSOCIATION
SUMMIT
TRAINING CONFERENCE: PRODUCT SAFETY, WORKER
SAFETY, AND SUPPLY CHAIN COMPLIANCE
BANGABANDHU INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER,
DHAKA
DECEMBER 9, 2014**

Nate Herman, Vice President of AAFA

Atiqul Islam, President, BGMEA

... and you who are participating in this training conference to learn about product safety and creating and sustaining a workplace that is safe for workers

Asalaam ‘malaikum, nameskar and good morning

Never again ...

Never again another Tazreen Fashions fire ...

Never again another Rana Plaza building collapse...

Never again should workers needlessly sacrifice their lives.

I am here today ... and you are here today ... with one overriding objective ... we seek to ensure that never again will Bangladeshi workers put their lives at risk by simply going to work.

Nate, I thank you ... I applaud you and the American Apparel and Footwear Association for hosting this critical conference. I believe this training conference will contribute importantly to ensuring safe products, to ensuring a safe work place, to ensuring that Bangladesh will never again know the horrors of Tazreen Fashions and Rana Plaza ... never again ...

This conference is about learning ... learning by sharing best practices for safety, especially workplace safety, from around the world ... this conference is about action ... assessing the action, the considerable action that Bangladesh has already taken, and the considerable action that Bangladesh must still take to ensure a safe work environment, one that meets agreed standards for fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' rights to freely associate and organize.

I am here today because I have a vision, a vision of the future of the Bangladesh apparel industry.

I see the day when Brand Bangladesh is a Premium Brand, a Preferred Brand, the brand that buyers around the world seek to buy because it is a safe product produced in safe factories by workers who are free to exercise their rights as enshrined in international covenants.

I see the day when billions of dollars of investment, both domestic and foreign, create modern, efficient, highly productive factories that provide workers safe, clean work environments.

I see the day when 6 million, 8 million 10 million Bangladeshi workers craft the apparel that will clothe the world.

I see the day when Bangladesh succeeds in building the roads, railroads and ports ... when Bangladesh provides the power and gas ... when Bangladesh conquers the governance challenges of corruption, red tape, lack of rule of law, and threat of political instability ... all needed to make possible the world's greatest apparel industry.

Truly, I see the day when Bangladesh is the greatest exporter of apparel in the world.

During the BGMEA summit we heard the goal of Bangladesh's exporting \$50 billion worth of apparel by the nation's 50th birthday in 2021. If Bangladesh undertakes now to address the nation's infrastructure and governance challenges, then this great nation could export even more to the global marketplace.

Mine is a grand vision, a wondrous vision, a beautiful vision, a vision that I believe could be and should be the reality of Bangladesh. I hope this vision will be Bangladesh's new reality.

But, maybe it will not be the nation's new reality.

As, you see, there is a second possibility ... a possibility I hope never comes true ...

By this scenario, Bangladesh has failed to fully transform the apparel industry ... unsafe factories continue ... workers' rights are abused and denied and frustrated workers lash out with

destructive wildcat strikes to demand safe working conditions ... Bangladesh experiences more disastrous Tazreen Fashions fires, more Rana Plaza building collapses ... these horrific disasters result in poisonous, confrontational relations between workers and owners and managers, thus destroying worker productivity...

By this ugly vision, Bangladesh has dropped to the tenth or twelfth largest apparel exporter in the world ... I hate this second vision ... it gives me nightmares.

Which vision will become Bangladesh's new reality?

The answer to that question will be determined by the people in this very room at this very moment.

I speak to the factory owners; I speak to the factory supervisors; I speak to the workers; I speak to the buyers; I speak to the Government of Bangladesh.

You will determine whether Brand Bangladesh becomes the Preferred Brand, the Premium Brand, the Best Brand, the Biggest Brand in the world of my vision.

I call on the owners ... all owners ... to lead the transformation of the apparel industry by dynamically embracing change, by supporting inspections to ensure your factories are safe, by undertaking any needed remediation, by respecting your workers, ensuring that they can freely associate and organize and partner with you to strengthen your company, by urging the government to develop the capacity to sustain factory compliance with agreed standards for workplace safety and respect of workers' rights.

I call on BGMEA and BKMEA to work with your members to ensure that each of them ... all of them ... 100% of the factories ... are part of the transformation of the apparel industry; all factories must fulfill agreed safety and labor standards. No owner can be allowed to jeopardize the future of the apparel sector by refusing to provide safe working conditions or by abusing workers' rights. No owner can be allowed to erode the image of the apparel sector by destroying a legitimate union. No owner can be allowed to become the next Rana Plaza or Tazreen Fashions disaster.

I call on supervisors and mid-level managers to insist on training and effective supervision so you learn how to work with ... not against ... your workers to ensure a safe, productive, motivated work force.

I call on the workers to know your rights and exercise them responsibly as you undertake to work with ... not against ... management to ensure a safe, productive, motivated work force. Organized workers ... workers with a real voice ... are critical to the transformation of the apparel sector and its success in the global marketplace. Just as owners' success is tightly linked to their workers, workers' success is linked to the success of their owners in competing effectively in the global apparel marketplace.

I call on the brands, the buyers to sustain their unprecedented commitment to supporting transformation of Bangladesh's apparel sector. Over the next three and a half years you can do much to help Bangladesh set the global standard for the apparel industry as it endeavors to bring the sector to standard for fire safety, factory structural soundness and respect for workers' rights. I believe the brands can ensure a level global playing field by ensuring that apparel producers around the world meet these same standards.

I call on the government of Bangladesh to exercise strong, powerful, effective, and positive leadership to transform the apparel industry. The government has already done much with achievements that none of us could have foreseen 18 months ago in the wake of Rana Plaza. In my view, the government should now complete the task. It should ensure that all factories ... all factories ... are inspected to ensure compliance with safety standards; it should create mediation and other mechanisms to resolve in real time the inevitable disputes that will arise between management and workers; it should hold accountable through the criminal process those who intimidate, harass, fire or physically attack labor organizers; government should continue to recognize legitimate unions that truly represent workers; government should promulgate soonest the implementing regulations for the Labor Act reforms of 2006 and 2013; it should undertake to ensure that all Bangladeshi workers, regardless of where they work are accorded the same protections and rights under the law; and the government should develop the capacity, the commitment, the will to sustain the factory inspections and other activities now done by the brands and development partners. Given the government's impressive achievements over the past year and a half, I believe that the government can succeed on each of these fronts.

Additionally, government should address the infrastructural and governance challenges that I cited earlier in my remarks. I believe that if there is sufficient will, government can overcome these challenges as well.

Meanwhile, my government remains deeply committed to supporting transformation of the apparel sector. We believe the three plus five mechanism by which three Bangladeshi secretaries (Commerce, Labor and Foreign Affairs) meet regularly with five concerned ambassadors (US, EU, Netherlands as the chairman of the Local Consultative Group for private sector development, Canada and one rotating EU position) is a powerful mechanism for coordinating and driving the transformation process. The Action Plan for restoring GSP privileges and the Sustainability Compact offer a shared roadmap for transforming the apparel sector. Through the 3+5 process and our assistance programs, America is helping Bangladesh to become an ever larger player in the global apparel market. After all, a prosperous, successful Bangladesh is in everyone's interests.

I believe in Bangladesh; I believe in the people of Bangladesh.

I believe owners, workers, brands and government with the support of friends and partners like America, the ILO and others, are charting the course to realize the vision of a grandly successful apparel industry, the vision of Brand Bangladesh as the Best Brand, the Greatest Brand and, why not, the Biggest Apparel Brand in the world.

I believe Bangladesh will transform the apparel sector to international standards for fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' rights to freely associate and organize. I believe this transformation will make the Bangladesh apparel sector a global model. I believe that Bangladesh truly will set the global standard for the apparel industry. This training conference today is an important step in this transformation process.

I wish this conference well as you do your part to transform the Bangladesh apparel industry into the world's best, as you do your part to help Bangladesh become Asia's next economic tiger, as you do your part to help Bangladesh create the Sonar Bangla ... Golden Bangladesh ... of its dreams.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*